NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T!

Captain Henry S. Shields, HQ USAFE/INOMP

Sometime in his career, each pilot can expect to encounter strange, unusual happenings which will never be adequately or entirely explained by logic or subsequent investigation. The following article recounts just such an episode as reported by two F-4 Phantom crews of the Imperial Iranian Air Force during late 1976. No additional information or explanation of the strange events has been forthcoming; the story will be filed away and probably forgotten, but it makes interesting, and possibly disturbing, reading.

* * * * *

Until 0030 on a clear autumn morning, it had been an entirely routine night watch for the Imperial Iranian Air Force's command post in the Tehran area. In quick succession, four calls arrived from one of the city's suburbs reporting a series of strange airborne objects. These Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) were described as 'bird-like', or as brightly-lit helicopters (although none were airborne at the time). Unable to convince the callers that they were only seeing stars, a senior officer went outside to see for himself. Observing an object to the north like a star, only larger and brighter, he immediately scrambled an IIAF F-4 to investigate.

Approaching the city, the F-4 pilot reported that the brilliant object was easily visible 70 miles away. When approximately 25 NM distant, the interceptor lost all instrumentation and UHF/Intercom communications. Upon breaking off the intercept and turning towards his home base, all systems returned to normal, as if the strange object no longer regarded the aircraft as a threat.

DECLASSIFY ON: 4 Dec 81
by: AFS/I HQUSAF

CONFIDENTIAL

A second F-4 was crambled ten minutes after th first. The backseater reported radar-lock on the UFO at 27 NM/12 o'clock high position, and a rate of closure of 150 knots. Upon reaching the 25 NM point, the object began rapidly moving away to maintain a constant separation distance while still visible on the radar scope. While the size of the radar return was comparable to that of a KC-135, its intense brilliance made estimation of actual size impossible. Visually, it resembled flashing strobe lights arranged in a rectangular pattern and alternating blue, green, red, and orange. Their sequence was so fast that all colors could be seen at once.

As the F-4 continued pursuit south of Tehran, a second brightly-lit object (about one-half to one-third the size of the moon) detached from the original UFO and headed straight for the F-4 at a high rate of speed. The pilot attempted to fire an AIM-9 missile at the new object but was prevented by a sudden power loss in his weapons control panel. UHF and internal communications were simultaneously lost. The pilot promptly initiated a turn and negative-G dive to escape, but the object fell in behind the F-4 at 3-4 NM distance. Continuing the turn, the pilot observed the second object turn inside of him and then away, subsequently returning to the primary UFO for a perfect rendezvous.

The two UFOs had hardly rejoined when a second object detached and headed straight down toward the ground at high speed. Having regained weapons and communications systems, the aircrew watched the third object, anticipating a large explosion when it struck the ground. However, it landed gently and cast a bright light over a two-three kilometer area. The pilot flew as low over the area as possible, fixing the object's exact location.

Upon return to home base, both crewmen had difficulty in

DECLASSIFY ON: 4 Dec 81
by: ACSI, HQ USAF

adjusting their night vision devices for landing. The landing was further complicated by excessive interference on UHF and a further complete loss of all communications when passing through a 150 degree magnetic bearing from the home base. The inertial navigation system simultaneously fluctuated from 30 to 50 degrees. A civil airliner approaching the area also experienced a similar communications failure, but reported no unusual sightings.

[redacted] While on a long final approach, the F-4 crew noted a further UFO. This was described as a cylinder-shaped object (about the size of a T-33 trainer) with bright steady lights on each end and a flasher in the middle. It quickly approached and passed directly over the F-4. In answer to the pilot's query, the control tower reported no other air traffic in the area, although they subsequently obtained a visual sighting of the object when specifically directed where to look.

[redacted] The following day, the F-4 crew was flown by helicopter to the location where they believed the object had landed. This turned out to be a dry lake bed, but nothing unusual was noticed. As the helicopter circled off to the west, however, a very noticeable beeper signal was received, and eventually traced to a nearby house. They immediately landed and asked the inhabitants if anything strange or unusual had occurred the previous night. Yes, they replied, there had been loud noises and a very bright light, like lightning. The helicopter returned to base and arrangements were made to conduct various tests, such as radiation checks, in the vicinity of the house. Unfortunately, the results of such tests have not been reported. [redacted]

4 Dec 81
DECLASSIFY ON: ACS/I, HQ USAF